

# Substance Abuse and Mining:

## A Deadly Combination

Controlled substances such as alcohol, illegal drugs and certain prescription drugs impair the ability of the user to function safely in the workplace. Even certain over-the-counter drugs or remedies can make you drowsy, affect your ability to think clearly, and impair important motor skills and reaction time.

At the least, the use or abuse of controlled substances in the workplace generally results in impaired performance and lost productivity. At its worst, substance abuse on the job can result in serious injury and death.

Heavy industries like mining are generally considered to be more dangerous to workers than other occupations. If you are working under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the risks are even greater that you will be injured or killed, or cause the injury or death of a coworker.

### What is Substance Abuse?

Substance abuse is the improper use of a variety of prescription and controlled illegal drugs, over-the counter drugs, and alcohol.

### Alcohol

About six out of ten adults drink alcoholic beverages; of these, one out of ten is an alcoholic. The use of alcohol in the workplace

can endanger you or your coworker because it slows reaction time and impairs your ability to think clearly.

### Prescription Drugs

There are many prescription drugs that can impair your ability to function safely while on the job. They include drugs which through side effects, may act as stimulants or depressants, and others such as tranquilizers, muscle relaxers, and antihistamines.

- *Ask your doctor or your pharmacist if medication that has been prescribed for you will interfere with your ability to do your job safely.*
- *Read and heed the warning labels placed on most prescription drugs. Such labels caution the user about potentially dangerous side effects, such as drowsiness, and advise against the operation of machinery while taking the medication.*

### Over-the-Counter (Non-prescription) Drugs

Many people believe that drugs that can be purchased from a pharmacy without a prescription cannot cause serious harm to the user. However, even the most commonly used cold remedies can cause drowsiness, affect your ability to think clearly, and may even affect your balance.

- *Always read the warning labels and carefully follow the directions for proper dosage of any over-the-counter medication.*
- *Consult your pharmacist if you have questions or concerns about potential side effects.*

### Illegal Drugs

The artificial "high" caused by most illegal drugs will impair your ability to function safely on the job. Some of these drugs may give the user a false sense of control or heightened awareness, when in fact, they reduce reaction time and affect judgement. Excessive amounts of some drugs or alcohol can be fatally toxic. Never mix drugs with alcohol.

### The Costs of Substance Abuse

The use or misuse of alcohol and drugs is a contributing factor in injuries and deaths in the workplace each year. Impaired workers endanger not only themselves, but their co-workers as well.

Substance abuse on the job results not only in needless injury and death, but also in poor work quality, low productivity, lost work time, and job loss. Substance abuse can cost you more than just your job; it can cost you your family, your friends, and your life.

## **Substance Abuse Counseling Centers and Other Related Information**

District 2, Mine Safety & Health Administration has compiled the following list of substance abuse counseling/treatment services located in and around the western Pennsylvania coalfield area. These organizations offer a wide range of substance abuse prevention, education, consultation, and treatment services.

ARC Manor  
200 Oak Avenue  
Kittanning, PA 16201  
1-800-323-1333 or (724) 548-7607

C.A.R.E. Center  
63 South Washington Street  
Waynesburg, PA 15370  
(724) 627-6108

New Visions Chemical Dependency Program  
Memorial Medical Center  
1020 Franklin Street  
Johnstown, PA 15907  
(814) 533-1627

Open Door Counseling & Crisis Center  
20 S. Sixth street  
Indiana, PA 15701  
(724) 465-2605

Cove Forge Behavioral Health System  
Affiliate of White Deer Run Inc.  
P.O. Box B, New Beginnings Road  
Williamsburg, PA 16693  
1-800-873-2131x1124

### **Possible Substance Abuse Symptoms:**

Performance: Inconsistent work quality, poor concentration, lowered productivity, increased absenteeism, unexplained disappearance from the jobsite, carelessness, mistakes, errors in judgment, needless risk taking, disregard for safety, extended lunch periods and early departures.

Behavior: frequent financial problems, avoidance of friends and colleagues, blaming others for own problems and shortcomings, complaints about problems at home, deterioration in personal appearance, and complaints and excuses of vaguely defined illness.

**SEPTEMBER 2004**

**15th National Alcohol and Drug Addiction  
Recovery Month**

**Department of Labor Website - Working Partners  
for an Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace:**

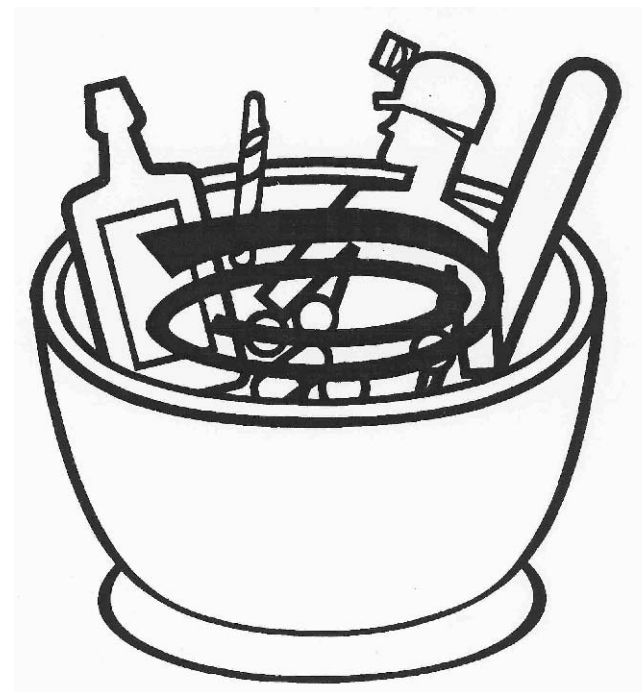
**[said.dol.gov](http://said.dol.gov)**

**MSHA, District 2 Website:**

**[www.msha.gov/District Pages/District 2](http://www.msha.gov/District%20Pages/District%20)**

Information assembled by District 2.  
Content for pamphlet obtained from VA Dept. of  
Mines, Minerals & Energy, and DOL Working  
Partners for an Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace  
website.

# **DRINKING, DRUGS, AND MINING**



## **DON'T MIX**